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Bulgaria Knew Of Plot on Pope, Paper Reports

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 30 (UPI)—The CIA believes that Bulgarian officials knew in advance of a terrorist's plans to kill Pope John Paul II but never thought they would be carried out, the Los Angeles Times reported today.

The CIA is convinced that neither the Bulgarians nor the Soviet Union instigated the attack on the pope in St. Peter's Square 20 months ago, the Times reported.

Despite the fact that no proof has been found, the Times said CIA specialists believe that Bulgarian intelligence agents knew Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca was bent on killing the pope. But they reportedly considered him an unstable person who probably would be captured.

"The CIA conclusion makes the Bulgarians—and by extension the Soviets, who control the Bulgarians—accessories before the fact," the Times quoted an unidentified source. "It dilutes their guilt, but not very much."

If the White House accepts the CIA assessment, it could remove at least one stumbling block in the way of a summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Yuri V. Andropov. Andropov was head of the KGB, the Soviet secret police and intelligence network, at the time the pope was shot.

"Reagan could never meet Andropov if it was proved unequivocally that the Bulgarians, and therefore the Soviet KGB, was behind the plot to kill the pope," a U.S. official told the Times.